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A Rejoinder

to

the articles of Mr Shourie
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Punjab—India

THE TROUBLES IN PUNJAB

Mr Shourie (May 12, 13 and 14—Indian Express) needs to be appreciated for saying honestly what he felt. His some statements, however, if not corrected, will create a wrong impression about Sikhism.

1. Cow sacred to the Sikh Gurus : Cow or any other animal was never sacred to the Gurus and neither is to their disciples. A wrong meaning is given to the statement that Sikhs are protectors of Gao-Garib. Gao-Garib is a proverb which refers to a poor/helpless person and it does not mean the cow and the poor. Guru protects the meek (not the cow) by warning that if stronger men suck the blood of the helpless and weak (through corruption, adulteration, under—weighment, illegal gratification, etc.) it is as sacriligious act as eating cow by a Hindu or pig by a Muslim. Absence of human feelings and religious respect in the society is visible from the fact that no one feels concerned, not even the Sikhs, when political, legal, official, social and other powers are used to bully and even kill the down-trodden (the real cows), who actually deserve mercy. Guru Nanak protected human-cows and not animal-cows.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was completely surrounded by powerful Hindu priests. Hindu ceremonies were performed at the marriage of his son. When he died, his queens and maid-servants (nine in all) performed 'Sati'-a custom

strongly prohibited in Sikhism. Donation of kohinoor to Jagan Nath Temple, cow protection and giving cows in charity etc., as mentioned by Mr. Shourie were done under the pressure of Hindu priests. None of these would become a Sikh practice just because they were adopted by the Maharaja. Further, Kuka Sikhs are mentioned as cow protectors because they killed the butchers at the cost of their life. Let the readers know that they do many more Hindu rituals—worship of fire, sun, performing havans, untouchability, (puritanism). The fact is that Kukas are not Sikhs in the same way as Ahmadiyahs (Qadianis) are not accepted as Muslims. The sacrifices made by Kukas for the cow therefore does not make it a sacred animal for the Sikhs.

2. Religion and Politics : together or separate : The troubles in Punjab are the result of not because religion and politics are one according to Sikh faith but because they have been made alien to each other under the influence/need of "Opportunisms". Sikhism is a way of life and not a theoretical philosophy to be believed or not to be believed. Sikhism is not a code of rituals and ceremonies. To be a Sikh, one has to follow—(i) truthful living, honest means of earning, (ii) service to society (without discrimination of caste or religion) neither as a favour nor to oblige others but as a duty assigned to a Sikh. He must well understand and always keep in mind that all humanity, not just the Hindus, or Indians alone, are created by the same God. Welfare of the whole society is his aim and included in his daily prayers. Would some one say what harm would occur if the above principles of Sikhism are adopted as a faith by all our politicians.

If the religion and politics are separated (as is the case to-day) what will check a Minister from selling jobs, admissions, contracts & licences. Only check is the conscience which is being killed by preaching keeping of religion away from public life (politics).

Unfortunately, those who preach that religion & politics are one, do not appear to have adopted themselves this principle in practice. In actual life, political exigencies weigh heavier than religion and public interest. The present loss of faith in social and political justice demands acceptance of the principle, rather than denigrating it that politics must be guided by the religion for service to the poor and public as desired according to Sikh faith.

3 Appropriation : It is wrong to say that 'Hindus' have been appropriated by Sikhs. If it is accepted that Bhai Mati Dass and other associates with the Guru were 'Hindus' then Guru Teg Bahadur and other Gurus have also to be labelled as 'Hindus'. The fact is known to all that Guru Nanak Dev refused to be initiated as 'Hindu' by not undergoing the 'Janju' ceremony. Those who accepted his teachings were called Sikh (disciples). He declared there is no Hindu or Musalman, all of us are same and equal **Insan** (human-beings).

Response to the article The Troubls in Punjab

Mr. Shourie has exposed his closed and biased thinking through his article in three instalments appeared on May 12, 13 and 14, 1982 in the 'Indian Exprees'. Let the facts be put before the general public for their own decision.

He accepts Hindus and Sikhs would not do what has been done to sacrilege the temples and gurdwaras. He therefore assumes that some mischevious elements have-taken for ride both Hindus and Sikhs and made them to fight to serve their own ends i. e. fomenting trouble and not letting the followers of the two faiths to come closer. It should have ended there. But he makes wrong assumptions later-

1. Cow was as sacred to Sikh Gurus as to the Hindus

Unfortunately, this thinking is the starting point of the trouble. Day in and day out, efforts are made to prove that Sikhs are a sect of Hindus which they are not. The Gurus totally rejected the communal approach. The very first lesson, Guru Nanak gave, was there is no Hindu, no Musalman, all of us are simple *insans* (human-beings). The Sikh has to believe that there is only one religion—"Humanity". Twice a day he wishes welfare of the whole

community, not just of the Hindus or the Musalmans. Sikhism in the modern terminology is 'Humanism'. It has same respect for Musalmans as for Hindus because it recognises them as human-beings and not as Hindus or Musalmans.

Distortion of basic principle of Sikhism has been made by the opportunists, politicians and ill-informed religious leaders. Unlike Hinduism Sikh Gurus never considered cow as sacred. They rather preached that a person who sucks the blood of the poor actually is like a Hindu eating a cow or a Musalman eating a pig, i.e. the religion of Guru Nanak is service to the helpless and weak men and not to the animals.

It is the incorrect interpretation of the word 'gao-garib' which has led to the wrong idea of cow being considered sacred by the Gurus. Gao garib does not mean a cow and a pauper but it means a helpless and a meek person. To prove his wrong statement, Mr Shourie quotes references from Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Kukas. Performance of 'Sati' by nine women (Queens and maid-servants) at the pyre of Maharaja Ranjit Singh does not justify inclusion of sati as a Sikh practice. Giving of cows and Kohinoor in charity only proves that the Maharaja was under the strong influence of Hindu priests which is a historical fact. Kukas cannot be considered as Sikhs (in the same way as Ahmedias i.e. Qadianis cannot become Muslims) there being a basic difference that they do not consider Adi-Granth as their final Shabad Guru. Kukas do havans, they worship sun and fire. These practices being adopted by Kukas cannot become Sikh practices.

Unfortunately, Mr Shourie thinks that Sikhs and Hindus alone have a common heritage. Let the people know that Sikhs have a common heritage not only with Hindus but also with the whole Indian community, including Muslims. Sikhs consider themselves human-beings first and last and that is their faith. He points out to the idolatory and mindless rituals being performed by the Sikhs. It is good he has noted it. Let him know that they are the Hindu practices introduced in the Gurdwaras because of the Hindu dominance and they are not Sikh principles. They are practised with the wrong hope of bringing the majority community nearer, even when they are prohibited in Sikhism.

2. Prejudices and fears between two communities

They have been created by the opinion of the majority that Sikhs are second-rate citizens and therefore, must depend on the mercy of the majority. This, they consider, is the principle of democracy.

Mr Shourie has tried to throw the blame on English people for making Sikhs feel that they are different from the Hindus. He quotes, among other things, a book 'Hum Hindu Nahin' by Bhai Kahan Singh. It was not the outcome of foreign interference but the result of the desire of domination by the Hindus over the Sikhs. If the Hindus had cared to understand Sikhism, by now all of them would have felt pride in being Sikhs. Services by Sikhs were rendered not to the British but to the country which were appreciated by no less a person than Mahatma Gandhi, who sent a telegram congratulating the Sikhs "The first

battle of Independence has been won", when the Imperial Government had to bow down to the Sikhs during their struggle for independence of the Gurdwaras. Shri Madan Mohan Malvia advised all Indians to baptise one son as Sikh in each family. Was he instigated by the Englishmen or it was his genuine appreciation of the services rendered by the Sikhs to the nation that he desired every family to accept Sikhism.

If the majority stops feeling jealous of the minority just because the latter has a superior religious philosophy, there would be no trouble. Sikhs do not believe in worship of idols (idol worship mentioned by Shourie is being practised not by the Sikhs but by those who have a Hindu thought but appear to be Sikhs by bearing turbans) or division of society into upper and lower classes. They have faith only in one God and brotherhood of all humanity. There is no place for the worship of trees and animals like monkeys, cows or snakes in Sikh faith. The majority community, feeling the Orthodoxy (inferiority) of their faith, is trying to become superior by making ill-conceived efforts of ridiculing the Sikh faith. The Sikhs had there, fore to retaliate and claim that they have a different identity and a different faith. Hence the book 'Hum Hindu Nahin'. Why is there no book 'Hum Musalman Nahin'? Because Muslmans have never said that Sikhs are a sect of Islam, even though if any other faith is nearer to Sikhism, it is Islam and not Hinduism which is nothing but a chaos of thoughts and a bundle of rites and rituals.

Mr Shourie talks of a concession-Punjabi Suba given to Sikhs. This reveals his mind and makes him naked.

The right which was given to all the languages was denied to Punjabi and after a long struggle, it was only partially agreed and that is considered a 'concession'. This exposes people of his thought that Sikhs are a second-rate citizens. They have no right of their own as citizens of India. It is proclaimed a concession to the Sikhs that the Hindus have agreed to give Punjabi language its some place, not the due place. He is silent that the Hindus who speak Punjabi but mentioned Hindi as their mother-tongue, were doing the greatest dis-service not only to the Sikhs but also to the nation by alienating such a modern faith, from the mass of Indian society.

Why Mr Shourie closed his eyes to the fact that the majority community under the garb of secular Congress has been trying to finish Sikh faith by every possible legal and anti-social means available to them, being the rulers of India. It is said that the late brave Sardar Patel observed "Sikhs are a brave nation. Whenever anything is done to them, they get united and make the strongest nation in the world bow before them. Let us break them so that we can rule them otherwise they will rule the whole country". Accordingly, the Sikhs were first declared criminals after Independence. Later on, Nirankaris, Radha Swamis, Kukas, etc. were patted, helped with money and political power to create parallel Sikhism and confuse the masses. At the same time, allurements of position in services and other official help was given to the followers of these pseudo-Sikh leaders, just to take away the un-wary masses from the fold of genuine Sikhism. The result is the turbulence in the whole of Punjab. Why the Government is silent on the allegation that Nirankari Baba was given the status of an

official VIP when ever he visited outside India though he before being declared a VIP, had no status at all but was a discarded Sikh.

Even now, there are people with Sikh appearance, who are being used to disrepute Sikhism by making statements which are anti-Sikh. The poor fellows even though occupying ministerial positions, but are helpless because if they do not speak what their masters say, they would not just be put out of Government but would be sent behind the bars. Many illegal and criminal acts have been got done from them to keep them permanently under their feet. We pity them.

Akalis are said to have a free run and nobody is trying to put the law into action against them. The fact is that it is the majority community who have a free run to call a protecting watch dog as mad and then kill him. After labelling the Sikhs as criminals and communalists, they are being hounded like a prey. If some Hindu is killed, the whole Government is shaken and gets upset, while hundreds of Sikhs are put behind the bars and given in-humane tortures/punishments and even if dozens of Sikhs are killed, nobody even writes a line in sympathy. Even when their religious books are burnt, which are a permanent loss, they are not willing to register a case against the culprits unless public demonstrations are held at great cost to the community.

He has decried Sikhs for using Gurdwaras for political purposes. Why does he not say that the majority is using the political and official power to rule the Sikhs and

convert them into Hindus ? If the majority wants to finish the minority by hook or crook, from where else the Sikhs can draw support and protection except the Gurdwaras.

3. Sikhism and Politics

Mr Shourie is at pains to prove that politics and religion being one in Sikhism are responsible for the present troubles. Let all know that opposite is true. The absence of religion has permitted our Ministers to sell admissions, positions, places and posts. Even the members of the Service Commissions have to be appointed after heavy considerations of money. It was a big news that in early May, the Chief Minister dodged the public in Ludhiana so that he could meet only the industrialists in a closed room. What other conclusions can be drawn except that it was to suck the blood of the poor through industrialists by giving them licences to do anything they want with the helpless people (eat the in-numerable number of cows). Had his religion been combined with politics, he would not have done it.

The Sikh faith forces his followers to love the whole humanity, even their foes, and this is proved by the history. Unfortunately, the politicians of to-day, whether they appear in Sikh garb or Hindu garb, they are 'politicians' and keep the instructions of their faith away from them lest they stop them from doing the illegal and anti-social deeds they do. Let the responsible decide whether they want present "loot" by corrupt politicians or they want the religion "Humanism" to be put on the heads of the politicians to control their vicious desires.

4. Extra-territoriality of Sikh Priests and Gurdwaras

In the second instalment of his article, Mr Shourie protests against the non-use of authority over the extra-territorially of the Gurdwaras and Sikh leaders. He forgets that the investigating authority which demands to catch the culprits need not visit Punjab to recover the weapons because they have an armoury buried in the Yamuna near Delhi from where they can recover any weapon they want to tag to any person to justify their illegal and unlawful detention of Sikhs. It is a fact that they arrested many persons and then released some of them, because of the mass protests, they visualised that serious consequences would follow if false cases were proceeded further. Harassment and tortures of persons because of their being Sikhs still continue with a greater vengeance. All this is to satisfy the aggrieved party and to divert their attention that culprits are not being searched. Actually rumours go that they are the culprits themselves who are rulers in Delhi and they have no political will to catch their own people who were hired for such acts which would keep the Hindus and the Sikhs agitated and thus separated for their political aim of "Divide and Rule". He has rightly mentioned about the Mahan Sikhs. It is good because this confirms the author's observations that it is the ministers who stage-manage many things which have nothing to do with Sikhism.

5. Appropriation/obliteration :—

Mr Shourie talks of appropriations by the Sikhs.

Sardar Bhagat Singh being shown with a turban rather than with a hat is not acceptable to him. This is further confirmation of the fact that the Hindus think that Hinduism is superior to Sikhism and every right belongs only to them even to destroy the historical facts. Bhagat Singh was with turban when he was involved in shooting incident at Lahore. Later on to conceal his identity, he removed his hair put on the hat and English dress so that he could escape. Popularising the real form of Bhagat Singh is not acceptable to Mr Shourie. This reveals his attitude and ill-feelings about the Sikhs. A Sikh, appropriated by majority community by showing him with hat pleases Mr Shourie and persons of his thinking but when he is brought out in his actual form with turban, it becomes painful to them all. Could there be anything worse than this to create ill-feelings among the two communities?

Veer Varagi, a Hindu, is resented to have been appropriated as Banda Singh Bahadur. That way the whole Sikh community is the result of appropriation by Gurus. Veer Varagi took amrit and became a Singh and was placed at the head of five other Singhs and sent to Punjab. All, whether they were Hindu jats, Brahmins, Sudars, Moslims, were given option either to remain as they were and bear the zulam of rulers or to accept Amrit and adopt the faith of "Humanism", named "Khalsa" and be ready to sacrifice their heads for the upkeep of the principles of humanity. If Mr Shourie, like any other Sikh, accepts to adopt this faith, will he be appropriated to Sikhism or will he get freedom from the communal feelings, performance of meaningless and mindless rituals which he had been

encircled with so far.

Unfortunately, Mr Shourie is blind towards historical facts. He has reached the border of saying that Guru Nanak was a Hindu when he labels four Sikh associates of Guru Teg Bahadur as Hindus who were tortured and killed along with the Guru in Delhi. All Gurus had Hindu names and therefore, according to Mr Shourie, should be called Hindus. It shows either Mr Shourie is intentionally blind to the fact that Guru Nanak refused to be called a 'Hindu' by declining to put on "Janju" or very much limited information has been obtained by him about Sikh faith. A Sikh could have a Hindu, Muslim or any other name. It was at the time of Baptism in 1699 when the uniform of five Kakar and the name 'Singh' was given to bring uniformity in the Khalsa and inculcate the feeling of unity to keep their spirits high to resist the zulam committed by the strong and evil forces.

6. Anandpur Sahib Resolution

In the third instalment of his article, Mr Shourie is critical of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. This is the outcome of continuous ill-treatment of the Sikhs and not for the desire of independence from Delhi as he alleges. This has been cleared more than once and in unambiguous terms. How about similar demands from Bengal, Tamil Nadu and other States? They are as good if not better Hindus than the Delhi rulers. It is not the religion that Punjab wants more powers for but these are necessary for the development of the State in which the Centre and the majority community are not interested. People differ in

their opinions about the meaning of strong Centre. Strong Centre should not mean weak and incapacitated states, Which cannot make any progress.

Khalsa

The meaning of "Khalsa" has been mentioned to be 'pure' in the original sense. Khalsa means 'Royal'. The word 'Khalsa' refers to the land under the direct control of the Emperor as differentiated from the one controlled through State Heads, Jagirdars or Kings. The present day equivalent word would be 'Central'. Sikhs being directly connected with God, not through gods and demi-gods, were labelled 'Khalsa'.

'Raj Karega Khalsa'

i. e. 'the Khalsa shall rule' does not mean that there shall be a Cabinet of Sikhs alone as dictators and Hindus and Muslims will be ruled by them. This slogan means that there would be a Cabinet of humanbeings to serve the human beings as against the greedy and tyrant rule of the time (when slogan was designed) which will ultimately perish. To day it is repeated daily by the Sikhs as a part of their brave History and as a proof of having ended the tyrant rule by sticking to the principle of "Humanity" & suffering for it. It gives strength to them to fight the oppression with the firm hope of defeating it in the end. As 'Ram Raj' does not mean 'rule by the followers of Ram over others' but implies 'rule of good people for the goodness of society, similarly, Khalsa Raj refers to the rule of justice. This

hope was given to the followers of Sikh faith living in forests that ultimately truth will prevail if they continue to resist the injustice and zulam.

Mr Shourie gives a long history of pre-partition and post-partition days, indicating that Giani Kartar Singh wanted an independent Sikh State-that he wanted to save the Panth only. Hindus were safe in the hands of Congress, Muslims were safe in the hands of League. The only unsafe community was Sikhs which still remain unsafe under the dominance of Hindu communalism which is responsible for the present problems of the State. He observes that extremists of yesterday are considered moderates of to-day because more severe and extreme demands have been made by others which are against the ideals of our secular constitution. He has confused Secularism with Hindu communalism under the constitution. Every one has a right to believe and act the way he wants except the Sikhs who have been included in the Hindu Code Bill because they were not worthy for a Sikh code bill. It must be noted that Muslims have been allowed to follow their own personal laws. In the end, Mr Shourie preaches to educate our children about our traditions, of course by excluding the brave deeds of Sikhs. According to his "balanced" views "Sikhs are traitors" should be taught to the children because Amin Chand, a Hindu, was a model of loyalty. Probably he wants to have a nation of traitors only. He wants to conceal the facts of history which belittle the Hindus as a community. When Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus were busy in Punjab to sew together the humanity split into Hindus and Moslems and also as Khatri,

Brahmins & Sudras and preparing the nation to stop (which actually stopped for ever when Khalsa took over North India) the invaders from the West, foreigners took advantage of the weaknesses of the nation and entered from the South & East of the country. According to Daulat Rai Arya (1898) even when Guru Gobind Singh sacrificed every thing to save the nation and the Hindu Hill- Rajas from the tyranny of the rulers, they themselves stabbed his programme by fighting against him and thus delaying freedom. The only independent region, Punjab, was captured by Englishmen in (1845-1849) with the help of Hindus and not Sikhs. As mentioned earlier it is the Sikhs who fought the first successful battle to defeat the foreign powerful rulers and finally made them to quit. It is the Sikhs under the banner of Akali Dal who again successfully resisted the Emergency rule. This fact was on the lips of everyone in 1977 but is being quickly forgotten, like many other services rendered to the nation by the Sikhs.

In the end it is requested that the responsibility of the majority community to recognise the bravery and honesty of the minority community, because of their superior philosophy, may be observed in the overall interest of humanity.



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